

DURHAM DRINKER!

News for Discerning Drinkers in the City and County of Durham



ISSUE NO. 47

FREE

S & N WIN - FOR NOW

Scottish and Newcastle Breweries have won the first round of their battle to stay out of the clutches of Aussie predator Elders IXL (the brewers of Fosters lager, and owners of Courage and John Smiths). The government has ordered a Monopolies Commission inquiry into the bid, and this effectively stops the bid until the Commission reports its findings in March 1989. However, Elders immediately won round two by buying a further 10% of S & N's shares on the same day as the bid was referred. This takes Elders stake to nearly 24% of S & N's shares, and makes a takeover much more likely if the Monopolies Commission gives the go-ahead for the bid.

CAMRA was one of a number of political, trade union and consumer protection groups which called for the bid to be referred to the Monopolies Commission. If the bid is successful, the combined group will command over 20% of the market, second only to Bass (21%), and well ahead of Allied (14%), Whitbread and Grand Met. (both 12.5%). There would inevitably be brewery closures and job losses, as the enlarged group would have six breweries in the North of England alone, two of which are not equipped to brew lager - Newcastle and Nottingham. Elders have promised to site the headquarters of the new group in Edinburgh, and also promised that there would be no job losses in Scotland, but no such promise was made about the English breweries.

The takeover would also mean the loss of several beer and lager brands, as well as increased prices. A perfect example of this is S & N themselves - since their takeover of Matthew Brown last year, three real ale brands have been lost and prices have gone up by 9p-10p, only 1p of which was due to the Chancellor of the Exchequer increasing the duty on beer in this years budget. (Now you know who pays for takeovers - you the customer.)

The combined group would have a total of 15 real ales, some of which would not survive. Also to go would be some of the 'weaker' lager and keg beer brands, such as Slalom and Kestrel lager, and Newcastle Bitter. Elders deny this, but so did S & N before they took over Matthew Brown. So even if you are a lager or keg beer drinker, you should support CAMRA's fight to stop this takeover - it could be your favourite pint that is lost, as well as ours.

SPENNYMOOR'S MAGNIFICENT SEVEN

The area around Spennymoor, for so long a beer desert, is becoming a haven for cask beer drinkers. One new outlet has just opened and another could soon follow.

The Golden Fleece (formerly The Mineshaft, now back to its original name) has just reopened at Low Spennymoor and sells three very rare beers in the Durham area, Websters Choice, Ruddles County and Wilsons Bitter. Ruddles Bitter is to be added shortly. All thanks must go to Joan Robinson, a cask beer devotee.

Although it is nice to be able to drink cask beer in 7 outlets surrounding Spennymoor it would be better if at least one pub in the town centre sold it. Several have tried and all have failed.

While seven outlets seems healthy in a town the size of Spennymoor (look at Bishop Auckland). There are 18 other pubs selling keg beer only, 14 of which are in the town centre.

OUTLETS WITHIN 3 MILES OF THE TOWN ARE:-

The Masons Arms	Middlestone Moor	Camerons Bitter
		Camerons Strongarm
The Ash Tree	Spennymoor (Greenways Estate)	Tetley Bitter
The Green Tree	Tudhoe Village	Wards Best Bitter
The Coach and Horses	Butcher Race	Vaux Samson
		Vaux Bitter
Thinford Inn	Thinford	Whitbread Castle Eden
The Half Moon	Low Spennymoor	Wards Best Bitter
The Golden Fleece	Low Spennymoor	Websters Choice
		Ruddles County
		Wilson's Bitter

What is noticeable is the excellent range available with only one beer duplicated at two outlets. (Note the absence of our other "local" brewery - Scottish & Newcastle/Theakstons).

Another devotee and CAMRA member, Peter Collins formerly of The Half Moon, Low Spennymoor has recently taken over the Whitewings Country Club at Middlestone Moor, where Vaux Samson and a guest ale are available.

THE BUILDERS COMETH

One of the few "unspoilt", good old boozers in the county, has at last succumbed to alterations. July's 'Pub of the Month', the NEWTON CAP in Bishop Auckland, will be visited by Cameron's builders after Christmas. The plan is to make better use of the space available by moving the bar and opening up the "back room" (currently used for meetings and the Durham Jazz Club).

The last thing on the minds of landlord and landlady Chaytor and Mary Sampson is the creation of another open-plan flock-papered lounge-bar. We have assurances that no furry wallpaper or potted palms will cross the threshold, and that the Top House will remain the hub of the neighbourhoods social life and one of the last remnant of Old Auckland.

STRONGER STRONGARM

Hartlepool based brewers Camerons last month introduced Strongarm Premium, a 1045 degrees premium ale, available in bottles and keg as well as in traditional form. The 'new' beer is, in fact, not new at all, but a recreation of the original Strongarm recipe which was launched in 1955, and is aimed at the growing 'premium' beer market. CAMRA welcomes the new ale, and hopes that its introduction into pubs in the area will not mean the disappearance of Everards Old Original, which has been a popular 'strong' guest ale in Camerons pubs over the last few years.



MORE MAXIM PLEASE

Earlier this summer, as part of the 50th Anniversary of the introduction of the brew, VAUX allowed selected pubs in the area (as well as local beer festivals) to sell a cask-conditioned version of its famous bottled DOUBLE MAXIM beer. This was such a successful exercise that several of the chosen pubs report a strong demand from customers for Vaux to continue to supply the cask version. Come on VAUX, remember, the customer is always right.

Inn The Village

Just over a year ago, Barbara and Peter Dodd took over as licensees of the Village Inn, Hett, a mile or so "behind" Croxdale. One of CAMRA member Peter's immediate thoughts was that the bar would look much better with a handpump, and he followed this up by putting some McEwans 80/- in the cellar to add the finishing touch. The result has been a steady sale of real ale; while McEwans 80/- has been the regular ale on offer, it has occasionally been replaced by Theakston XB, Marston Pedigree, and Hadrian beers from Byker's independent.

After many years without the real thing, the Village Inn is now a true village inn - pleasant surroundings, real ale, a beer garden - and quite a comprehensive and reasonably priced menu on offer each evening and weekend lunchtimes. A quiz is held every Tuesday - all of this has helped to build the reputation of the Village Inn among connoisseurs of real ale.

***Breakfast, dinner, or tea?
(or just beer?)***

The North Briton, Aycliffe Village, purveyors of fine Samson "from the wood", will serve you breakfast, dinner, tea or supper - taking full advantage of the new licensing laws to allow 12 hours of eating and drinking time. It feels most civilised to be able to wind down with a pint after work - and still be home before the old opening time! It's nice to work near the "Brit"!

PUB NEWS

JOVIAL MONK, NEWTON HALL has stopped taking guest beers. However, it is the first pub in the area to sell TETLEY IMPERIAL in cask conditioned form. Customers will be less happy to notice that the cask Imperial is a massive 6p **more** expensive than the keg form, which is also available in the pub. CAMRA wonders at Tetley's intentions towards the cask version with this sort of price differential.

CROSSWAYS HOTEL, Nr. THORNLEY is a new outlet in the east of the county where McEWAN's 80/- and YOUNGERS No. 3 can be found on handpump.

QUEEN'S HEAD, GILESGATE is to be one of the first pubs in the area to get the new STRONGARM PREMIUM. The guest beers there at the moment are RUDDLES COUNTY and BELHAVEN 80/-.

BLACKHORSE INN, OLD CORNSAY is now selling CAMERONS BITTER on handpump.

SALUTATION and the **GARDEN HOUSE** IN DURHAM have stopped selling 'guest' beers.

FLEECE, BISHOP MIDDLEHAM becomes the second pub in the village to serve real ale with the introduction of DRAUGHT BASS.

THE SPORTSMAN, BISHOP AUCKLAND has recently replaced the THEAKSTON BITTER with a new beer for the town (and a rare one in the region) - WHITBREAD CASK TROPHY. Landlord Peter Creamer installed the new ale in September, and it has proved an instant hit - showing that a choice of real ales is a viable idea in Whitbread pubs (most of which do not even have one). The Sportsman is also taking advantage of the extended opening hours - you can enjoy a pint of well-kept real ale until 4 p.m. on weekdays and until 11 p.m. at night.

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

I/We wish to become a member(s) of the CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE LTD!

I/We agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the CAMPAIGN.

I enclose £9 for FULL MEMBERSHIP.

Full name
(Block Capitals)

Full Postal Address

.....

.....

Signature Date

Cheques should be made payable to Campaign for Real Ale Ltd. Applications should be sent to Membership
34 ALMA ROAD, ST. ALBANS, HERTS, AL1 3BW.

Diary

Mon. 14 Nov. THE PLOUGH, Shadforth
Social - All welcome

Mon. 28 Nov. TRAVELLERS REST, Witton
Gilbert - Committee Meeting

Wed. 14 Dec. GOLDEN FLEECE,
Spennymoor - Committee
Meeting

Fri. 16 Dec. CAMRA CHRISTMAS MEAL
- HETT VILLAGE INN
at 7.30 p.m.
(Contact Joan Gordon to book
on 0429 836253)